

## The RED MOUSE

A Mystery Romance

By WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE

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## CHAPTER V.

THE yellow light of the early June afternoon grew softer as it sank into and was absorbed by the deepening dusk, but to Miriam Challoner, propped up with red silk cushions in a strange attitude of expectancy, these things had ceased to matter, for out of her life a living presence had gone, leaving a void more harsh than death. For weeks now she had patiently waited, her ear strained at every sound, trying to associate it somehow with her husband's return. The servants seemed to tread on tiptoe as they went about their duties. The house was curiously hushed as though listening, always listening.

"Oh, why doesn't he come!" she cried, an agony of despair in her voice, and began to pace the room in nervous agitation.

At that moment a man noiselessly entered the room. She did not hear him until, suddenly looking round, she saw Stevens, the butler, advancing respectfully toward her.

Stevens held the silver salver before her, on which were several letters. There were nine in all, the last of which she quickly tore open as the sole missive fraught with possibility.

But she was doomed to disappointment, and, handing them back to him, she told him to put them on the desk.

"Stevens," she said falteringly, "send Foster to me at once."

Stevens turned on the instant and found Foster in a passageway shuddering.

"What's the matter with you?" he whispered at the same time placing his arm about her.

"What are you doing?" exclaimed Foster, with indignation, but made no attempt to release herself from his embrace. "Don't you hear the news-boys? What are they saying?" she went on, nestling closer to him.

"Listen!"

They did not have long to wait, for just then the hoarse, raucous voices of the newsboys calling early specials reached their ears. Then like a bolt from the blue rang out the words, "Challoner caught in Chicago!"

"They've caught him!" the maid almost shrieked, pushing Stevens violently away from her, and, starting in obedience to her mistress's commands, she added sympathetically:

"I hope she hasn't heard!"

And as fortune would have it Mrs. Challoner had not heard, but went on to inform the maid that she was going to her room to lie down.

On reaching her room, however, Mrs. Challoner abandoned her intention to lie down. Apparently calm and collected, she took a seat near the light and started mentally to place her house once more in order. Item after item she checked off from her memorandum upon her household pad.

There was an almost unheard tinkle of an altogether unseen bell, and before its sound died away Stevens had gone to answer.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Challoner when she summoned Foster. "I don't want to see anybody. I can't see any body! I won't!" she ended almost hysterically, and, gathering her trailing skirts in her hands, she fled to her room.

But no sooner had she reached the door than Shirley Bloodgood followed on her heels.

"I just simply couldn't stay away from you any longer, Miriam," she declared. "I know you don't want me here, but I can't leave you."

Miriam Challoner sank weakly at a table. Finally she leaned toward her visitor and asked, a world of pathos in the question:

"Is there any news outside?"

Shirley hesitated imperceptibly. "None, I haven't seen the papers. No, there's nothing new."

Mrs. Challoner threw her arms about the girl.

"Shirley, Shirley, I'd have gone mad, I think, if you hadn't come!" she cried and fell to sobbing, but after a moment she straightened up again. There was a defiant look in her face now, a tremor in the voice that said: "I don't care what he's done. I want Laurie to come back, do you understand? I want him back—I want him!"

Shirley Bloodgood bit her lips.

"I know, I know, Miriam—I do understand!"

"Oh, but you can't understand," she persisted. "You haven't a husband, and you don't know."

"Yes, yes, Miriam, I know," were the only words that rose to the girl's lips to comfort her, for at that moment the faint sound of the insistent doorbell broke in upon them.

Mrs. Challoner's slight frame shook with sudden agitation as she exclaimed:

"That doorbell will drive me crazy!" And, almost instantly recovering her composure, she gasped:

"If it should be Laurie!"

quickly left the room. Just outside of the door she encountered Stevens, and, quickly placing her finger on her lips, she motioned him to be silent. When they were well out of hearing he announced in a confidential tone:

"Mr. Murgatroyd, Miss Bloodgood?"

"Mr. Murgatroyd? William Murgatroyd? What does he want, Stevens?" She was plainly excited.

"Sh-h-h!" warned Stevens gently. "He's the prosecutor of the peace."

"Oh, then it is Mr. William Murgatroyd. But what does he want?"

Stevens shook his head. The next moment Shirley Bloodgood had entered the drawing room and stood gazing into the face of William Murgatroyd.

"Shirley Bloodgood?" The name fell incredulously from his lips. "You here?"

Shirley held out her hand.

"And you what are you doing here?" she asked quickly. "I didn't know that you were a friend of the family."

Tall, well built, with a smooth shaven face, a square chin and a nose that stood well out into the air, Murgatroyd was a man who appeared to be without enthusiasm; but, although sharp and businesslike, his manner was easy.

Turning to Shirley, he came to the point at once.

"I want to see Mrs. Challoner," he announced. "But I'm glad you're here, for I don't know her very well, and—"

"You can't very well see her now," Shirley interrupted, shaking her head. "She's frightfully unwell. She's ill. You know it's almost three weeks now since Laurie first went away, and—"

"I know," he broke in just a bit impatiently.

"What?" Shirley gasped, the truth at last dawning upon her. "You don't mean to say that you're here in—your official capacity?"

Murgatroyd smiled grimly.

"It's the only capacity in which I'm likely to be here, Shirley," he reminded her.

"But," she protested, "I thought they left these things to—"

"The police," he finished, and again smiled grimly. "They do, but there are reasons. You see, he went on to explain, "since I was appointed prosecutor of the peace I've turned up a thing or two in the police department, and, well, the police department and I are somewhat out of tune. This case they have put up to me and my men."

"Surely you can't mean to imply that you have to do this kind of thing your self?"

"Yes; it's up to me. I am sorry to remind you," he went on, the full responsibility of his office upon him, "that I am here to see Mrs. Challoner, to find out where Challoner is and to persuade her to persuade him to come back."

"Then he wasn't caught in Chicago?" Shirley exclaimed almost jubilantly. And then, touching him on the arm a bit familiarly, she added:

"Billy, you don't really believe that Laurie murdered Colonel Hargrave?"

Murgatroyd laughed a short laugh. "I don't know," he went on evasively, "whether Challoner murdered Hargrave or not."

"You don't know?"

"No," returned the prosecutor. "So far the evidence is purely circumstantial."

Shirley drew a long breath and echoed excitedly, "Circumstantial!" There was a flicker of a smile on her face as she added:

"Then the newspapers were wrong when they said it was a certainty?"

Murgatroyd held up his hand and went on to explain:

"What I tell you is confidential. You understand?"

"Yes, yes," she said impatiently. "But tell me about it—the real facts—that is, if you can."

"There's no reason why I shouldn't," he said, the prosecutor of the peace. "The real facts as we have them—as we have them, mind—are simple. Challoner quarreled with Colonel Hargrave."

"What about?" asked Shirley impulsively.

Murgatroyd flushed.

"That makes no difference," he answered, with some confusion. "The point is that they were enemies. It was a quarrel in which the passions of each were roused to the utmost. To make a long story short, Colonel Hargrave won \$10,000 at Gravesend. The men met in Cradlebaugh's. Another quarrel followed."

"What does that prove?"

"Nothing, only a man named Pemaban of Cradlebaugh's witnessed both quarrels, and Challoner has run away."

"But," persisted Shirley, "that evidence—"

"One moment, please," went on the prosecutor calmly. "Hargrave had the \$10,000 in cash with him, and—"

"Surely you don't think Lawrence would steal?" she commented.

Prosecutor Murgatroyd answered slowly:

"Frankly speaking, I do. I believe that Challoner would do anything."

"It's impossible! Why, the Challoners have any amount of money!"

Murgatroyd shrugged his shoulders. "Challoner's wife has, but—"

"It's the same thing," Shirley protested, "and she just adores him—you do not know how much she adores him, Billy?"

"But how about him?"

The girl shook her head and answered somewhat sadly:

"I know. She's blind to everything."

together.

"Indeed! You must have been a good friend to let him take his downward course."

For an instant this imputation seemed to rest heavily on Murgatroyd's shoulders, but he cast it from him quickly with a sigh and answered:

"A man's best friends are like a man's good wife—they do not desert him, whatever happens; he deserts them. And so it was with Challoner."

"And so at the last he has no friends?"

"But," he protested, "I am wasting time. I—oh, pardon me," he quickly corrected, flushing with embarrassment. "I did not mean my time exactly; but, frankly, I must see Mrs. Challoner."

"Miriam Challoner is ill, much too ill to see any one. She gave orders—"

"Excuse me, but Mrs. Challoner is not too ill," persisted Murgatroyd, "to walk from room to room. My men have seen her through the windows. I must see her."

Shirley made a movement to go.

"Oh, I can't tell her," she cried. "I'll ring for Stevens." She rang. "Stevens," she said as he came into the room, "will you tell your mistress—oh, I can't—I can't!" she faltered.

The servant left the room. Shirley sank into a chair and half covered her face with her hands.

"I don't believe—I never will believe that Lawrence did these things."

There was a pause. After a moment Murgatroyd remarked half aloud:

"There is but one way to reform a man like that—"

The prosecutor did not finish, for standing in the doorway was Miriam Challoner, pale as a ghost, a look of interrogation in her eyes.

Mrs. Challoner bowed and smiled faintly.

"I believe I have met Mr. Murgatroyd before," she said with a grace peculiarly her own.

Murgatroyd returned her greeting with:

"I need not assure you, Mrs. Challoner, that this is a very painful duty."

Murgatroyd bowed and, placing a chair for Mrs. Challoner, begged her to be seated.

"Mrs. Challoner," he began in a voice that was even more gentle than



"It is necessary for my men to search this house."

at any time before, "believe me that I've no desire to give you trouble unnecessarily."

"Please don't apologize," Mrs. Challoner repeated, holding fast to Shirley, as though she pinned her faith to that young woman.

"I shall begin at the beginning, Mrs. Challoner," he said. "I suppose, of course, that you have had the report that your husband has been found in Chicago?"

"What! Found! Laurie has been found!" she went on. "Thank heaven! I'm so glad! Now he must come back home."

"I had thought," said the prosecutor in even, businesslike tones, "that the news of his arrest would—would have been an unpleasant shock to you. I find that the shock is yet to come."

"You don't mean—you can't mean that?"

Murgatroyd bowed.

"I have already told Miss Bloodgood that the report was a mistake. Your husband was not arrested in Chicago."

At that Mrs. Challoner really broke down. She sobbed silently on the shoulder of the girl beside her. "Oh, Laurie, Laurie! Then you're not coming home!" she cried. "Most three weeks, Shirley, he's been away!"

Murgatroyd waited patiently until she had recovered, never once forgetting that he was the servant of the people.

"Mrs. Challoner," he said with simple directness, "the whole substance of the matter is this: I believe—we believe that Mr. Challoner has not left the east and that he may still be here in town—in this house even."

"In this house?" Miriam returned, with a faint smile. "I wish he were—indeed, I do wish he were."

"Mrs. Challoner," the prosecutor went on, "it is necessary that my men should search this house."

Shirley Bloodgood flushed indignantly.

"This is an imposition. It is preposterous, Mr. Murgatroyd, that you should doubt her word."

Murgatroyd was unmoved.

"It is necessary for my men to search this house," he repeated and not unwisely, for he well knew that there is

something that brings men—good, bad and indifferent men—back to their homes.

Murgatroyd left the room and returned almost instantly, followed by two men, Mixley and McGrath.

The men passed in unceremoniously and proceeded to search the room, places that even Miriam had forgotten about. They overlooked nothing, but silently, quietly in their businesslike way turned everything topsy turvy, replacing things in the end as they found them. Presently they turned to their chief and said:

"It's all right, prosecutor."

"Cover the rest of the house," again ordered Murgatroyd.

They grinned sheepishly.

"That's all done," they answered.

"What?"

McGrath nodded.

"Yes, while you were talking in here," he said, "we showed our shields, and they showed us through." He drew near and whispered: "We thought it best to take 'em by surprise. They hadn't no time to fix things, don't you see?"

"Nothing found?" asked Murgatroyd. Simultaneously they shook their heads and answered:

"Nothing."

Murgatroyd waved his hand and commanded them to wait for him at the door.

Turning to Mrs. Challoner, he said:

"If you know where Mr. Challoner is I want you to use your influence with him to make him come back. His flight amounts to a moral confession of crime. He has nothing to gain, you see," he went on to explain, "by staying away. He is bound to be caught. He cannot escape."

"I want him to come back," stammered Mrs. Challoner. "Yes, yes, he must come back and face this charge: You—don't think him guilty, Mr. Murgatroyd?"

Murgatroyd walked toward the door. If he had spoken his mind he would have answered in the affirmative, but instead he compromised with:

"I don't know," and abruptly left the house.

(To be continued.)

"I'm sorry," said the manager, when the advance agent had entered the private office, "but I'll have to discharge you."

"What's the matter? You surely don't think I've been loafing on my job, do you?"

"No. You've got the papers to print so many fine things about the star that she's demanding a raise of salary."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Flint—Have you any divine healers out your way, old man?

Flyte—Have we! Say, there's a young woman doctor next house that's a peacherino.—Boston Transcript.

He—If you loved me why did you first refuse me?

She—I wanted to see what you would do.

He—But I might have rushed off without waiting for an explanation.

She—I had the door locked.—St. Louis Times.

## Notice of Appointment.

Estate of Minerva Masters deceased. The undersigned has been appointed and qualified as executor of the estate of Minerva Masters, late of Highland County, Ohio, deceased. Dated this 15th day of February A. D. 1910. C. A. ROBERTS, Wilson & McBride, Attorneys.

## Legal Notice.

To John W. Cummings, of Harford City, Indiana, James T. Cummings, of Washington, D. C., Ohio, George Cummings, of Ipsa, Illinois, Earl Rhoads, of Fowler, Kansas, Clarence Rhoads, of Springfield, Ohio, Melvia Rhoads, Zella Rhoads, Wilbur Rhoads, Ova Rhoads and Ena Rhoads, of near Cynthia, Pike County, Ohio, Ethel Cummings and Treasie Cummings, Seaman, R. F. D., Adams County, Ohio. You will take notice that I have presented to the Probate Court of Highland County, Ohio, for allowance to me against the estate of Daniel Cummings, deceased, a certain claim of one hundred and sixty-two dollars with interest thereon at 6 per cent per annum from the 6th day of September 1907, and that said court has fixed the time for hearing the same on 6th day of April at 10 o'clock a. m. CHAS. E. CUMMINGS, One of the executors of the estate of Daniel Cummings, deceased.

## Legal Notice.

The unknown heirs of Thomas H. Long, deceased, will take notice that on the 15th day of March, A. D. 1910, Anna M. Spencer filed her petition in the Common Pleas Court of Highland County, Ohio, being cause No. 8367, against the said unknown heirs of Thomas H. Long, late of Highland County, deceased, praying for an order of cancellation and release of record of a certain mortgage executed and delivered by George Fuller and others, to said Thomas H. Long, said mortgage bearing date of May 13, 1903, and duly recorded in Vol. 20, Page 48, of Highland County mortgage records and covering the following real estate: "Situate in the state of Ohio, county of Highland and village of Hillsboro and described as follows: Being the undivided one-half of the west half of 15-1st, Number twenty-two (No. 22) as the same is known and designated on the recorded plat of said tract, and for further proper and equitable relief in the premises, said parties are required to answer said petition on or before May 14, 1910, or the allegations thereof will be taken as true and the relief prayed for granted by the court. ANNA M. SPENCER, Plaintiff. James A. Wilkins, Attorney.

## LITTLETON.

March 21, 1910.

Miss Kate Sherry called on friends at Lynchburg, Thursday.

Born to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Stubbs March 10, a son.

Misses Gertrude and Anna Hastings, Lola Stroup and John Hastings, spent Thursday evening with Thos. Shaffer and family.

Miss Clara Spilker spent Saturday and Sunday with friends at Dodsonville.

Robert Hopkins, of Danville, was calling on friends here Sunday.

Mrs. William Thomas is visiting relatives in Cincinnati.

Dr. H. A. Harper, of Buena Vista, was a guest at the home of J. W. Hastings, Sunday.

Will Shaw and family were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Stubbs Tuesday evening.

Mrs. Sherry and family entertained Willard Roush and family one day last week.

Daniel Sully, the former cotton king, is taking steps to become cotton king again, through the medium of a new ginning machine he has in hand.

## Legal Notice.

Samuel Igo, of Kitley, Ill., Stella Gorman, of Mount City, Ill., da Route 1, Rufus Rodgers, Henry Rodgers, Harvey Rodgers, S. E. Rodgers, of Ottawa, Kan., H. Edin Rodgers, of Cosmo, Okla., Alva Rose, of El Dorado Springs, Mo., Mollie Wilson, of Chanute Kan., J. W. Igo, of Eldon, Mo., J. H. Igo, of Arapahoe, Okla., Fred Igo, of Elk Lake City, Utah, C. L. Igo, of Vinita, Okla., Omer N. Igo and George Igo, of Clayport, Ind., Ella Nelson, of Pueblo, Colo.

The heirs at law of Fred Igo, deceased, of Henry Igo, deceased, of Charles Minor, deceased, late of Champaign, Ill., of Daniel Minor, deceased, late of Windsor, Shelby County, Ill., of Monroe Minor, deceased, late of the state of Iowa, of Eunice Sewell (nee Minor) deceased, late of Terre Haute, Ind., whose names and places of residence are unknown, will take notice that N. W. Igo, as plaintiff, on the 7th day of February, 1910 filed in the Common Pleas Court of Highland County, Ohio, where the same is now pending, a petition for the partition of the real estate of which Mahala Minor, late of Highland County, Ohio, died, seized and which is situated in Corners Township, Highland County, Ohio, and bounded and described as follows, to-wit:

First Tract—Beginning at a stone in the Mayville road, S. W. corner of Thomas Houstad's land said survey, the line running with said Houstad's land S. 80 degrees E. 8 poles to a stone in said Houstad's line; thence S. 10 degrees W. 4 poles to a stone; thence N. 80 degrees W. 8 poles to a stone in the Mayville road; thence N. W. 4 poles to the beginning, and being the same premises conveyed to Margaret Minor and recorded in deed book 14, page 30 of said county.

Second Tract—Beginning at a stone corner to Margaret Minor's lot and running E. 8 poles to a stone; thence N. 4 poles to a stake; thence W. 8 poles to the Mayville road; thence S. on the side of the road 4 poles to the beginning, being the same premises conveyed to Mahala Minor and recorded in Vol. 34 page 154 of the deed records of said county.

Third Tract—Beginning at a stake in the Mayville road, Margaret Minor's S. W. corner, thence S. 4 poles with the road to a stone; thence E. 8 poles to a stake; thence N. 4 poles to a stake in said Minor's corner; thence with her line 8 poles to the beginning containing 32 poles or more or less, recorded in deed book 14 page 408 of said county.

The said Mahala Minor held the title to the first tract by descent from her mother, and to the second and third tracts by purchase.

The parties above named and referred to will take notice that they have been made parties defendant to said petition and are required to answer the same on or before the 2nd day of April, 1910, or an order of partition of said premises will be taken as prayed for in said petition.

N. W. Igo, By WILSON & MCBRIDE, His Attorneys.

## Teachers' Examination.

The Highland County Board of School Examiners hereby give notice that examinations of applicants for certificates will take place in the Washington Building, Hillsboro, on the first Saturday of every month.

Examinations will be held on the third Saturday of April and on the second Saturday of May.

As prescribed by law, the fee for teachers' examinations will be \$1.00, payable for Patterson examinations no fee is charged.

N. B. LAMONDA, Pres. H. B. GALLIETT, Sec. J. S. FARRIS, Hillsboro, O. Board of Examiners.

## Notice of Appointment.

Estate of Robert Stuart, deceased. The undersigned has been appointed and qualified as administrator de bonis non with will annexed of the estate of Robert Stuart, late of Highland County, Ohio, deceased. Dated this 5th day of March, A. D. 1910. ARTHUR BUCK.

Fires of any size are so scarce that the city of Rotterdam, with a population of over 400,000, has practically no fire department, while the prevalence of canals offers an ever-ready water supply to fight any fires which might occur.

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